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The Two Unidentified Geographical Names in the Moabite Stone.—By REV. T. C. FOOTE, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the details of the discovery of the Moabite stone in 1868. The historical allusions and geographical names which we find in this inscription of Mesha tally so well with the O. T. that a suspicion could be aroused as to the genuineness of the stone.¹ Almost all the geographical names have been identified with places mentioned in the O. T.

Two names, however, have not yet been satisfactorily explained: שֶׁרן and מַחֲרַת (or שַׁחֲרַת). They are classified by Smend and Socin² under tribal names. Perhaps the true explanation of these names is to be found by taking them not as *nomina propria* but as *appellativa*, as was suggested in the Semitic Seminary of the Johns Hopkins University during the past year.

The connection in which the names occur is as follows: The king of Israel had built the city of Ataroth, probably the place mentioned in Num. 32, 34 as built by the Gadites. King Mesha captured it and slew all the people; afterwards repeopling it with the men of שֶׁרן the men of מַחֲרַת (or שַׁחֲרַת). As was the custom with Assyrian kings when they captured or built a city and then peopled it with persons from another locality, so it appears that king Mesha, after destroying the inhabitants of Ataroth, peopled it again with men of שֶׁרן and men of מַחֲרַת (or שַׁחֲרַת).

שֶׁרן plain is the name generally applied to the strip of low land on the Mediterranean coast stretching from Joppa to Cæsarea. But in 1 Chr. 5, 16 it is applied, without the use of the article, to some locality in Gilead east of the Jordan. A comparison of the Greek versions³ shows that the word is uncertain and the place could hardly have been a city of any size. However, it is not necessary to take it as a proper name, but it may be regarded as an appellative referring to the plain which lies north of the

¹ Cf. Schlottmann, *Die Siegestsäule Mesa's* (Halle, 1870), pp. 4 and 5.

² *Die Inschrift des Königs Mesa von Moab* (Freiburg i. B., 1886), p. 33.

³ עַל-תּוֹצְאוֹתָם שֶׁרן מְנַרְשִׁי; LXX. Καὶ πάντα τὰ περὶχωρα Σαρὼν ἕως ἐξόδου, *Alia* καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀφωρισμένοις Σαρὼν ἐπὶ τῶν διεξόδων αὐτῶν.

tableland of Moab. This plateau of Moab is referred to in Deut. 3, 10; 4, 43; Josh. 13, 9, etc., as מִישׁוֹר, a portion of the inheritance of Reuben.

The land of Moab lies east of the Dead Sea, being about 50 miles long by 30 wide. It is divided by the deep valley of the Arnon, now the Wady el-Môjib, north of which, on the high plateau, most of the cities of Moab lay. This region was known as מִישׁוֹר *table land* (in the A. V. *plain country*)—"the Sharon of Eastern Palestine (as Major-General Wilson says)¹ which extended beyond the river Arnon, through Moab to the mountain country of Edom. The whole district where not very rocky is covered with grass and affords excellent pasturage. It was in the rich upland pastures and extensive forests of Gilead and Bashan north of the Arnon that the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh took up their abode."

With one exception מִישׁוֹר refers to the plain or table land east of the Jordan, apparently in contradistinction to the rocky soil and more broken ground on the west. But in 1 K. 20, 23-25 מִישׁוֹר seems to apply to the plain of Sharon west of the Jordan. These terms שָׂרֹן and מִישׁוֹר are not necessarily fixed localities but may be applied as appellatives, and hence the אֲשֶׁר שָׂרֹן of the inscription need not mean men of a place called Sharon, nor need it be taken as the name of some special tribe, but may simply denote the Men of the Plain, valley men in distinction from mountain or plateau men. Hence a *nomen appellativum*. If the objection be made to this explanation that one would expect יוֹשֵׁב instead of אִישׁ, as in יוֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ in Gen. 50, 11, or יוֹשְׁבֵי הַהָר in Josh. 13, 6, it is sufficient to note that the dialect of Moab does not always conform to the Hebrew idiom. But in fact the identical use of אִישׁ does occur in the O. T., e. g. Neh. 3, 22, אֲנָשֵׁי הַכֶּבֶד *men of the plain*, Gen. 25, 27, אִישׁ שָׂדֶה *man of the field*.

In the case of the other name, it is not entirely certain whether the first consonant is ש or מ. It was first read ש, notably by Clermont-Ganneau. Later, Ginsburg read מ, thinking of Machærus (מַכְכֵּר, מַכּוֹר), which is an impossible identification.²

¹ See the Bible Atlas, S.P.C.K. 1900, Tristram's *Land of Moab*, and Buhl, *Geographie des Alten Palästina*.

² Cf. Diestel in *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie* 16, 234.

Since Ginsburg, however, the character has usually been read מ. The difference between the ש and מ in the script of the Moabite stone is practically only the additional down stroke of the מ. Now Dr. Lidzbarski, of Kiel, has recently published in part 1 of his *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* (Giessen, 1900) p. 6, the result of his examination of the reconstruction of the Moabite Stone in the Louvre, and also of the squeezes, and states that the plaster cast only runs as far as the place where the down stroke of the מ would be, if it were a מ. He gives it as his opinion, however, that it is a מ rather than a ש. The earlier reading of ש by Clermont Ganneau, adopted by Nöldeke, is under the circumstances equally possible. But it makes no difference whether we read ש or מ if the word is taken as an appellative.

In the case of ש we should have שחרת fem. of שחר *morn-ing*, Arabic سَحْرَة *suḥre*. The form שחרת, it is to be noted, occurs in the next line of the inscription, in the phrase מִבְּקַע שַׁחַרְתַּי *from the breaking of the morning*. We have then such an expression as בְּנֵי קָדָם *Sons of the East* i. e. the Bedouins of the desert.

But if it be preferred to read מַחֲרַת we have a word meaning *front* and hence the *east*, identical with Assyrian *mixrat* = קָדָם, so that אִשׁ מַחֲרַת would again be the exact equivalent of בְּנֵי קָדָם *Sons of the East*, the Bedouins.

The chief point is that the names are probably not *nomina propria* but *appellativa*, and the reading of the lines would then be: "I settled in it (i. e. Ataroth) men of the plain and men of the east," i. e. Bedouins.